DBQ – Egyptian Religion and the Afterlife

Introduction:
Ancient Egyptians had a strong belief in life after death and made elaborate preparations for their journey into the afterworld. You’re probably familiar with mummies and the pyramids, but have you ever noticed the hieroglyphic writing that was often placed in coffins, on papyrus (paper), or on pyramid walls?

Directions:
In this assignment, you’ll read some excerpts from the *Coffin Texts* and the *Book of the Dead*. Each of these texts is a group of spells that helped protect and provide for a dead person in the afterlife. An individual would select and purchase parts of the text to be placed in his or her coffin.

**The Coffin Texts**
Read the text on the following pages then answer the following questions. Remember that this text speaks to a regular person who has just died—not necessarily a pharaoh.

Here are some vocabulary words to help you:
- Osiris: god of the underworld
- Anubis: god of funerals; sometimes known as the son of Osiris

1. Imagine that you’re an ancient Egyptian. You’re quite old, and you know you won’t live much longer. You’ve just read or heard this text. How might it make you feel about your impending death? Why?

2. What do you think is the purpose of this text? Why would the Egyptians have written it in their coffins?
The Book of the Dead
Read the italicized part of the Introduction (the first paragraph) and the first fifteen statements. Here are some vocabulary words to help you:
- rapacious: extremely greedy and aggressive
- sullen: gloomy, dull, or somber
- transgressed: sinned
- perjury: lying

3. Name at least five things that a dead person had to promise upon entering the Hall of Justice shortly after death.

4. Why do you think this text was an important part of the Book of the Dead?

5. Does it remind you of any other text or religion?

Finally, read "[The Chapter of] Making the Transformation into a Hawk of Gold." Note that the chapter starts with "The Osiris Ani saith," which means that the text is what Osiris, god of the underworld, has said.

6. What has Osiris done in this chapter?

7. Remember that the Book of the Dead served mainly to protect and provide for the dead. In what way do you think this chapter might have done this? In other words, why do you think this chapter was written?
Coffin Texts, I, 197

The so-called Coffin Texts, inscribed on the interior of coffins, belong to the Middle Kingdom (2250-1580 B.C.). They attest a marked 'democratization' of the ancient funerary ritual of the pharaoh. Just as the pharaoh of earlier times had claimed to participate in the fate of Osiris, so each soul now hoped to achieve a ritual assimilation to the god.

Now are you a king's son, a prince,
as long as your soul exists, so long will your heart be with you.
Anubis is mindful of you in Busiris,
your soul rejoices in Abydos where your body is happy on the High Hill
Your embalmer rejoices in every place.
Ah, truly, you are the chosen one!
you are made whole in this your dignity which is before me,
Anubis' heart is happy over the work of his hands
and the heart of the Lord of the Divine Hall is thrilled
when he beholds this good god,

Master of those that have been and Ruler over those that are to come.

Translation by R. T. Rundle Clark, in his *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1960), P. 134
The Book of the Dead

The Declaration of Innocence - Chapter 125

Introduction

*What should be said when arriving at the Hall of Justice, of Two Truths, purging N [the deceased] of all the forbidden things he has done, and seeing the faces of all the Gods.*

Spell for descending to the broad hall of Two Truths:

N shall say:

**Declaration of Innocence Before the Gods of the Tribunal**

Hail Far-strider who came forth from Heliopolis, I have done no falsehood.

Hail Fire-embracer who came forth from Kheraha, I have not robbed.

Hail Nosey who came forth from Hermopolis, I have not been rapacious.

Hail Swallower of shades who came forth from the cavern, I have not stolen.

Hail Dangerous One who came forth from Rosetjau, I have not killed men.

Hail Double Lion who came forth from the sky, I have not destroyed food-supplies.

Hail Fiery Eyes who came forth from Letopolis, I have done no crookedness.

Hail Flame which came forth backwards, I have not stolen the god’s offerings.

Hail Bone-breaker who came forth from Heracleopolis, I have not told lies.

Hail Green of Flame who came forth from Memphis, I have no taken food.

Hail You of the cavern who came forth from the West, I have not been sullen.

Hail White of teeth who came forth from the Faiyum, I have not transgressed.

Hail Blood-eater who came forth from the shambles, I have not killed a sacred bull.

Hail Eater of entrails who came forth from the House of Thirty, I have not committed perjury.

Hail Lord of Truth who came forth from Maaty, I have not stolen bread.
The Book of the Dead

[The Chapter] Of Making The Transformation Into A Hawk Of Gold

The Osiris Ani saith:- I have risen up out of the seshett chamber, like the golden hawk which cometh forth from his egg. I fly, I alight like a hawk with a back of seven cubits, and the wings of which are like unto the mother-of-emerald of the South. I have come forth from the Sektet Boat, and my heart hath been brought unto me from the mountain of the East. I have alighted on the Atet Boat, and there have been brought unto me those who dwelt in their substance, and they bowed in homage before me. I have risen, I have gathered myself together like a beautiful golden hawk, with the head of the Benu, and Ra hath entered in [to hear my speech]. I have taken my seat among the great gods, [the children of] Nut. I have settled myself, the Sekhet-hetepet (the Field of Offerings) is before me. I eat therein, I become a Spirit-soul therein, I am supplied with food in abundance therein, as much as I desire. The Grain-god (Nepra) hath given unto me food for my throat, and I am master over myself and over the attributes of my head.